

## Update: Brady water emergency could last week or more

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**Medy Leitheiser, water operator at the Brady water treatment plant, holds a water sample Friday. Sludge from holding ponds where Brady gets its water has contaminated the drinking water. TRIBUNE PHOTO/LARRY BECKNER**

*Medy Leitheiser, water operator at the Brady water treatment plant, holds a water sample Friday. Sludge from holding ponds where Brady gets its water has contaminated the drinking water. TRIBUNE*

*PHOTO/LARRY BECKNER*

People in Brady are being advised to avoid all contact with town water as officials from Montana Rural Water Systems and the State Department of Environmental Quality work to isolate the source of septic contamination in the community's municipal water system.

Pondera County Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) issued an emergency public health declaration Thursday morning after high concentrations of biological contaminants were detected in Brady's water. DES has now opened an emergency coordination center (ECC) at the Brady Fire Hall to respond to the immediate sanitation and drinking water needs of more than 200 residents.

Initial reports suggested the source of contamination was an in-town waterline break. Officials are now focusing their attention on Brady's water treatment plant. According to Brady County Water and Sewer District President Laurie Campbell, the town's entire water system has been depressurized, meaning all 107 households and businesses that rely on Brady municipal system water hookups are now completely without water.

Campbell said engineers inspecting the town's water system have indicated it will take at least a week to repair the system. Until then, DES is supplying bottled drinking water to Brady's municipal water system customers, and six sanitation centers with portable toilets and hand washing facilities have been set up around the community.

Pondera County DES Coordinator LeAnn Hermance is advising municipal water users in Brady to turn off their water heaters, and to be extremely cautious with fire, since the Brady fire district is currently without a local source of water.

The Tribune will provide updates of the situation as more information becomes available

Pondera County declared a public health emergency after a waterline in Brady broke and contaminated water to 107 hook-ups. The break has affected around 200 residents.

Issues to the water district began over the weekend, but the Pondera County Commission declared the emergency Thursday, said LeAnn Hermance, the Pondera County Disaster and Emergency Service coordinator.

"At this point things are calm, and we're dealing with it as best we can," Hermance said after spending the day at the scene.

She said that crews are currently digging out the areas of concern, and the problem has been identified.

Today Pondera County will be rolling out a five-day plan to figure out how much drinking water residents will need. Bottled water was being distributed out to Brady on Thursday, but larger containers will hit the streets Friday.

Five stations of porta-potties have also been scattered around the town in strategic locations to best serve residents, Hermance said.

Residents can receive the free water at the Brady Fire Hall.

Water will be available Friday from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m.

Businesses will need to acquire their own source of water for customers and staff since only immediate water needs will be provided for residents. Bottled water will be provided for home pets but not livestock.